Met Office

January 2006

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1961-1990.

UK overview

Rainfall totals were well below average. England, Wales and Northern Ireland, all had their driest January since 1997. Out of the last 15 months (since November 2004), 13 months have had below average rainfall across England SE & Central S. Mean temperatures close to average across the south of the UK, but well above average across the north of Scotland.

Aviemore recorded a temperature of -11.7 °C and Grantown-on-Spey recorded a temperature of -12.6 °C, both on the 31st. On the 9th/10th over Scotland, 69 mm of rain fell at Sloy, the wind gusted to 85 m.p.h. at Lerwick and the temperature reached 14 °C at Machrihanish.

England and Wales diary of highlights

Generally it was a dry month across England and Wales but there was a period of wet and windy weather for Wales and western counties between the 9th and 16th.

1st to 4th The first few days of January were changeable with some light rain at times, and on the whole rather cloudy. It was mild over south-west England with Teignmouth (Devon) recording 13.9 °C on the 3rd. Frost was a problem overnight where the cloud broke, Coltishall (Norfolk) reporting a night minimum temperature of -3 °C on the 3rd/4th.

5th to 8th A ridge of high pressure built across England and Wales from Scandinavia, keeping many places dry but still on the cloudy side. During the 8th an occluded front pushed into southern counties of England bringing some heavy bursts of rain in places.

9th to 16th It became much more unsettled over Wales and western counties of England during this period as a series depressions ran in off the Atlantic. Capel Curig (Gwynedd) recorded 62.3 mm of rain in the 24 hours ending 1800 on the 10th and Shap Fell (Cumbria) 34.4 mm the following day. On the 14th some heavy bursts of rain moved northwards across Devon and Cornwall with Cardinham (Cornwall) receiving 20.4 mm of rain. The very cold air over the near Continent blocked the progress of the rain eastwards, hence eastern counties of England had very little rainfall.

17th to 19th Some of the warmest temperatures of the month were recorded during this period as strong and mild south-westerly winds flooding in off the Atlantic. Temperatures reached 13.7 °C at Bognor Regis (West Sussex) on the 18th and 13.9 °C at Great Malvern (Worcestershire) on the 19th. Capel Curig (Gwynedd) reported a gust of 61 knots at 0100 on the 20th.

20th to 31st High pressure dominated this period with very little rainfall being recorded, although during the afternoon of the 27th an area of sleet and snow pushed into East Anglia and Kent and spread westwards into the West Country overnight. Slight accumulations were reported in places. It saw also a cold spell of weather with maximum temperatures of 2.2 °C at Credenhill (Herefordshire) on the 22nd and 1.2 °C at Woburn (Bedfordshire) on the 24th. The nights were cold as well with some very sharp frosts, -8.7 °C at Redhill (Surrey) on the 25th and -7.5 °C at Shap Fell (Cumbria) on the 29th.

Scotland diary of highlights

Anticylonic and dry at the start and end. Unsettled southwesterly mid-month.

1st to 8th: Pressure rose across Europe and high pressure became established near the Baltic, giving southerly winds over Scotland. The weather was dry but cloudy with temperatures falling slowly from a mild start. On the 8th the cloud cleared and the overnight temperature fell to -9 °C at Aboyne.

9th to 20th: The high pressure retreated to the south-east and depressions moved north-east from the Atlantic to the Norwegian Sea. Over Scotland the weather was unsettled with fronts and strong south-westerly winds bringing mild and wet conditions on 9th/10th, 12th/13th and 18th/19th. On the 9th/10th 69 mm of rain fell at Sloy, the wind gusted to 85 m.p.h. at Lerwick and the temperature reached 14 °C at Machrihanish. On the 12th 30 mm of rain fell at Tulloch Bridge and gusts reached 78 m.p.h. at South Uist. On the 18th/19th 66 mm of rain fell at Aultbea and temperatures reached 14 °C at Aviemore and some other stations. On other days the weather was more showery and a ridge of high pressure gave a fine day on the 14th.

21st to 31st: High pressure re-established itself over Russia until the 24th and then transferred to be near Scotland. The weather was again dry and mostly cloudy with temperatures falling slowly after a mild start. On the 29th the cloud cleared from the south and overnight temperatures fell to -12 °C in Highland Glens. Fog formed in the central lowlands and south-west with a maximum temperature of -3 °C at Eskdalemuir on the 30th. However, most places retained sunny skies by day with temperatures rising to 10 °C on the mountain tops.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

An unusually quiet and uneventful mid-winter month.

The New Year opened on a rather cloudy note with some showers and a chilly north-west wind on the 1st, but the 2nd was milder with temperatures recovering to double figures in many areas.

The days between the 3rd and 9th had variable cloud amounts and scattered showers and temperatures were around the early January average of 5 to 7 °C. The morning of the 9th was cold and very frosty however, with temperatures down to -4 to -6 °C.

The period between the 10th and the 20th was the most unsettled period of the month and all areas had rain or showers, but it was frequently mild with temperatures peaking between 10 and 12 °C. The only notable windy day of the month occurred on the 12th when gales developed with gusts of 45 knots recorded quite widely and locally 50 knots in exposed locations.

The last third of the month became increasingly quiet and settled as high pressure dominated the weather. It was often cloudy and gloomy but the cloud cleared to leave a fine and very sunny day on the 29th. The clearer skies resulted in a very hard frost on the morning of the 30th with -7 °C recorded in a few spots - the lowest temperatures of the month. Freezing fog also formed and persisted all day on the 30th with temperatures in foggy areas remaining below zero.

Temperatures were above average - despite the very cold nights at the end of the month.

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